

'I MISS IT BUT I HATE IT': STUDENT'S PERCEPTION ABOUT MATHEMATICS LEARNING AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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Abstract

For some people, just hearing the term 'mathematics' is enough to bring back bad school memories, not a few even have math anxiety into adulthood. However, for some children, mathematics is liked and missed. Strange? No, it's just all about perception and learning experience. This study aims to explore the perceptions and experiences of elementary school students regarding mathematics. Using a qualitative approach with a phenomenology design, this study selects 6 elementary school students in Cirebon City purposively. In-depth interviews were conducted by probing and then analyzed using interactive analysis which included raw text, relevant text, repeating ideas, and themes. This research succeeded in revealing that students have a 'love-hate relationship' tendency with mathematics. Students said that they sometimes miss mathematics because they can do calculations and achieve a feeling of satisfaction, to the point that smart students get pride in being successful in mathematics. Meanwhile, the flow of logical thinking in mathematics lessons, the lack of working tutorials, and the high expectations that are not achieved cause people to often hate mathematics.

Keywords: Students perception, Mathematics Learning, Elementary school, Qualitative approach.

INTRODUCTION

Mathematics has an important role in improving the quality of human resources because mathematics is needed in all aspects of life. Everyday life is inseparable from mathematical problems, so everyone needs to master mathematics well in order to be able to solve mathematical problems in everyday life (Setyono, 2007). Mathematics is a subject that is not liked by some students because currently, there are still many students who think that learning mathematics is challenging and less interesting, so many students get scores below the average of the standard minimum completeness score requirements, the enthusiasm for learning decreases, of course, this will affect the results of learning mathematics.

In mathematics learning, one of the goals is to equip students with the ability to think logically, analytically, systematically, critically, and creatively and work together. Achieving this goal is certainly not easy. Various initial

perceptions that students have towards mathematics subjects form various attitudes toward mathematics material. There are several reasons why students need to learn mathematics, namely: (1) clear and logical means of thinking; (2) a means to solve everyday life problems; (3) a means of recognizing relationship patterns and generalizing experiences; (4) means to develop creativity, and (5) means to increase awareness of cultural development. In line with these reasons, strong mastery of mathematics from an early age is needed to master and create technology in the future (Cornelius in Abdurrahman, 2010: 253). Some have a high attitude toward mathematics, but not a few have a phobia of mathematics.

This is undoubtedly caused by the learning experience they feel. The results of learning mathematics can be used as a benchmark that describes the students' success level in the process of learning mathematics to find out how much students understand the material in mathematics. This is reinforced by the opinion of Purwanto (2011:

47) who says that learning outcomes are included in educational components that must be adapted to educational goals, because learning outcomes are measured to determine the achievement of educational goals through the teaching and learning process. So that learning mathematics is fun for students, students must first have a great interest in learning it. Learning must attract students' interest in learning to facilitate the achievement of learning objectives. Teacher factors can also influence low interest in learning. The low interest in learning mathematics can be caused because the teacher using learning methods that could be more attractive (Inawati, 2011). Based on the survey, the Indonesian nation still carries a low quality of education. This can be minimized by optimizing education for children from an early age, especially mathematics education, given the public's image of mathematics as frightening. In fact, mathematics can be given to children from an early age (Putro, 2008).

Unfortunately, no research has discussed the things that make students love math or even hate math, especially at the elementary school level. Therefore, this study aims to explore elementary school students' perceptions of mathematics and the factors that shape these perceptions.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method. A qualitative research approach collects and analyzes data through words, images, or sounds to understand phenomena in a deeper context (Gumilang, 2016).

This study chose fourth-grade students in the first semester to become research participants, to be precise, in Cirebon Regency. Participants are willing to be interviewed in a representative class of students. The number of participants taken was only five students, namely four male students and one female student. This research is interactive with the data collected, including raw texts, relevant texts, repeating ideas, and themes.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

Mathematics, a Subject 'Considered' to be Difficult and Scary by Students

When learning mathematics, if a child has difficulty learning, it will be considered as something normal and common or often encountered. This is because mathematics is a subject that is a frightening specter for children. Mathematics is considered difficult to understand because it is abstract (Rosaria, 2022).

Some of the children we found and interviewed also have the same problems in learning mathematics. They argue that mathematics is a very difficult subject, and they often avoid it.

In the learning process in elementary schools, students have some disliked subject tendencies. This study found that mathematics is a subject that students do not like at school. Zuhud stated this.

"I don't like math, because I don't understand how"

(Interview Zuhud, 14 March 2023)

This makes Zuhud dislike mathematics, and it turns out that the cause is not the students who do not want to learn mathematics but the teacher's explanations that students do not understand. It is part of a teacher's job to pay attention to the needs of students when teaching. If a teacher has a unique way of teaching mathematics, students will likely like the subject of mathematics (Amri, 2016).

Apart from Zuhud's opinion, there were other statements from students related to why most students did not like mathematics. Rizfa also conveyed this statement.

"A bit dizzy (to learn math), because there is no example"

(Interview Rizfa, 14 March 2023)

The reason given by Rizfa, a grade 4 student, stated that the mathematics subject made her feel dizzy during the learning process, especially in the learning method used by the teacher, who did not give an example first. Students are directly given a variety of questions that must be done and completed.

"I cannot play if I get a low score (math)"

(Interview Nabastala, 14 March 2023)

Threats from parents who are harsh enough for their children also make children feel pressure because they are required to get perfect grades. Even though children need the support and direction of parents to continue to develop, we should appreciate people who never demand that their children always get perfect scores.

Nabastala also conveyed a similar expression.

"I was scolded by my mother if someone did the math wrong, especially if the grades were bad.."

(Interview Nabastala, 14 March 2023)

Students who experience dislike of mathematics will experience negative feelings. I found this out after interviewing several students, one of whom was Zuhud.

"Sometimes I dare to (do math) sometimes I don't"

(Interview Zuhud, 14 March 2023)

This negative feeling then makes the student lack self-confidence, so he does not dare to try again. Meanwhile, courage is one of the motivating factors for students to do and explore something (Rahmawati, 2013). Negative feelings are not only experienced by Zuhud but are now being felt by a student named Niskala.

"I'm nervous, I'm afraid of being wrong (when learning math)"

(Interview Niskala, 14 March 2023)

This feeling was felt by Niskala when she was studying mathematics. He said this because according to him when mathematics lessons were in progress, he felt doubts or was afraid of being wrong in doing them.

"Yes, I felt uncomfortable (during math class) so I wanted to go home quickly"

(Wawancara Niskala, 14 Maret 2023)

Niskala felt the desire to go home soon when mathematics was in progress. This feeling of discomfort is the reason why mathematics is considered scary by students and makes Niskala feel like leaving class immediately.

"Later, usually the break is postponed if no one is advancing or no one can do the work."

(Interview Nabastala, 14 March 2023)

Students also admitted that sometimes their break time was postponed because Nabastala and his friends did not dare to come forward to work on the questions the teacher gave. The teacher's attitudes and policies are very interesting because they will shape the personality of students who are learners, more courageous to move forward, and confident. However, the response of Nabastala and other students was just the opposite. They feel the method is what makes him afraid of math lessons.

"Haha ... yes there is a feeling of fear when remembering that there will be math lessons."

(Interview Nabastala, 14 Maret 2023)

Nabastala felt fear and worry when he remembered that there would be a math lesson that day. This was because, in mathematics, there was material for complex calculations, a series of numbers that were quite complicated, so that it made your head feel like it would explode..

Mathematics, a subject that is 'also' liked by students

Mathematics has always been a subject of emotional conflict among students, especially at the elementary school level. Some students harbor a deep-rooted dislike or even hatred of the subject, but others feel a passion for completing math assignments. As explained earlier, many students say that mathematics is the most difficult subject to understand. It is not uncommon for them to even feel negative feelings when dealing with it, as well as several other reasons that become a factor in the emergence of this dislike.

Even so, it was found that some students were different from most other students. They expressed their preference for learning mathematics. As stated by Zuhud.

"Mathematics (is the preferred subject)"

(Interview Zuhud, 14 March 2023)

Zuhud said he liked mathematics. This is certainly not without reason, Zuhud likes mathematics because there are positive feelings that arise and are felt by him. He felt a spark of enthusiasm and high enthusiasm when he was studying mathematics. A high sense of enthusiasm and enthusiasm is of course a strong motivation in learning and exploring a field (Oktiani, 2017). Without passion and enthusiasm, there is no drive and drive to do something (Arianti, 2019).

"Enthusiasm when learning mathematics"
(Interview Zuhud, 14 March 2023)

Apart from feeling excited, there are other feelings that students can feel when studying mathematics, such as the opinion expressed by Niskala.

"When I have finished working on it, I feel excited and proud"
(Interview Niskala, 14 March 2023)

This feeling of pride is felt by Niskala when she succeeds in doing assignments or math exams, she feels a sense of pride when she succeeds in completing them. This feeling arises because of the feeling of gallantry when it succeeds (Kmariyah & Syam, 2022). It is undeniable that many people think that mathematics is a difficult subject to understand, so of course students who can master mathematics will feel proud. In fact, with these difficulties it should be a challenge to be able to conquer it. Like what Niskala said, he said that completing math assignments is an exciting thing.

"Math is fun!"
(Interview Niskala, 14 March 2023)

This is also influenced by support from the surrounding environment by not putting excessive pressure when students are studying a material. By not putting too much pressure, students will feel comfortable and have no worries when they make mistakes. Students who get support and positive responses from either the teacher or parents will certainly feel positive feelings about the learning that takes place (Simorangkir, 2014).

"No, I rarely get scolded when I'm doing math, even though I sometimes get it wrong."
(Wawancara Niskala, 14 Maret 2023)

Although there are some students who feel a fluttering feeling when studying mathematics, some others do not feel this feeling. As Zuhud said.

"I don't feel nervous"
(Interview Zuhud, 14 March 2023)

It was not only Zuhud who stated this, statements from Niskala seemed to agree that he was not afraid to study and do mathematics, because he felt a sense of 'safe' even though he occasionally made mistakes. On the other hand, Niskala received the direction and guidance needed to correct mistakes in the process (Endriani, 2015).

Not only by providing positive support and response from parents and teachers, another reason some students say that mathematics is a fun subject is how the process occurs during learning and also how they can find answers to the problems given. This was stated by Tania, she said that she likes mathematics because she likes the process of calculating and looking for answers.

"How to get the answer (which makes math fun)"
(Interview Tania, 14 March 2023)

According to Ningsih (2020) states that students' abilities and desires to achieve learning goals also play an important role during learning. Some students may feel like giving up when they can't find the answer they want, but others feel their adrenaline rushing to get a math answer. Zuhud also expressed a similar opinion. He also believed that finding and calculating math answers was the most exciting part of ongoing learning.

"Mmm ... yes, from the calculation it makes me happy (learning math)"
(Interview Zuhud, 14 March 2023)

In addition to the statement made by Zuhud, other factors drive and motivate students to be able to complete math assignments. Such as the acquisition of high scores when working on it can also be one of the motivations for students to continue studying mathematics. Tania said she liked math because she had gotten the highest score in that subject.

"Mmm... 90s (Highest math scores)"

(Interview Tania, 14 March 2023)

Apart from the statement made by Tania, another statement was made by Niskala.

"It's good that Mrs. Novi will give you snacks later." (if on an exam, there are students who get the highest score, they will get a reward in the form of snacks)"

(Interview Niskala, 14 March 2023)

In line with the statement from Niskala, the same opinion was also expressed by Anggraini (2022), who stated that giving rewards is a way teachers can increase student motivation and interest in learning.

Not only that, but other factors are the reason some students favor mathematics; they think that liking and mastering mathematics makes them look smarter; Nabastala expressed this opinion

"Make smarter (if you can master math)"

(Interview Nabastala, 14 March 2023)

Nabastala is not the only one who says this, because many people also think the same as Nabastala. This is influenced by the stereotype that exists in society that everyone who is good at math, will automatically be good at all fields. This is because learning mathematics requires accuracy, critical thinking skills, and other aspects. So that assumption appears and makes many students' views of mathematics worse (Alwan, 2022)

DISCUSSION

Based on the interviews, not all students find it difficult to learn mathematics. Some others expressed positive feelings and reasons why they liked math lessons. Besides motivation among students, several other things that teachers can pay attention to in teaching in the classroom are giving rewards and appreciation and presenting a safe and comfortable environment for students to explore themselves when studying mathematics. So that students feel free to make mistakes because the teacher will give guidance and direction. Thus, the teacher has an important role to play in providing a positive learning experience for students so that

students do not feel afraid or worried when studying mathematics.

PENUTUP

Not all students hate math. Student perspective, in this case, can be used as motivation. Students stated that they liked mathematics for several reasons, according to the students' view that "mastering mathematics looks smarter. Apart from looking smarter, teachers like to give rewards. So far, what makes students like mathematics is due to motivation within students and also learning models that make students understand the material presented. In this case, the learning model has influenced student respondents when studying mathematics. Even so, it is necessary to increase the role of the teacher when in the teaching and learning process so that by giving appreciation to students can increase students' interest in mathematics. Because of that, what makes students like mathematics and happy when learning.

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